

11.35 am, 9 May 2017

Subject: Q and A last evening: your response on overall commemoration expenditure

Hon Dan Tehan MP
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of Anzac

Dear Minister

It was a surprise to hear you say on *Q and A* (in response to my video question) that you did not know where my figure of \$600 million for Australian commemoration of World War I comes from.

This figure comes from extensive research since 2014 by Honest History, commencing from close analysis of Commonwealth and State budget figures done by Ben Eltham, then of *New Matilda* magazine and Deakin University, now of Monash University. The earliest of this expenditure was in 2008 but the great bulk of it dated from 2011 and later.

Eltham's material was updated by Honest History using public sources, such as Budget papers, announcements by you and your predecessor Ministers, and parliamentary committee transcripts.

All of this research links from <http://honesthistory.net.au/wp/kaching-another-5-million-from-corporates-to-the-anzac-spend/>, a post in April 2016. At that time, we reckoned the total figure was \$566.8 million, comprising Commonwealth (about \$331 million), State (about \$140 million) and corporate (about \$95 million) components.

We have rounded up the figure to \$600 million, taking account of boasts by Lindsay Fox about his fund-raising target from corporate donors (\$300 million, later revised down to \$200 million) and commitments he had received from potential donors (money which could be expected to flow eventually into the Commonwealth's accounts), and possible additional expenditure in state budgets for 2016-17. See also our note on commemoration expenditure in the Commonwealth Budget for 2016-17: <http://honesthistory.net.au/wp/commonwealth-budget-2016-and-the-size-and-direction-of-government/>.

Figures of between \$500 and \$600 million have been regularly in the public domain in the last couple of years, for example, in *News* 15 September 2015 <http://www.news.com.au/national/anzac-day/government-spending-more-than-8800-for-every-digger-killed-during-ww1/news-story/34808367386af87773c8e4326d2a46e8>, referring to the then current figure of \$552 million and quoting me and the current prime minister's son-in-law, James Brown, and in *The Honest History Book* recently published (link below; RRP \$34.99).

On 28 January 2016, Honest History put a figure of \$562 million to Robert McKellar, chief of staff, and other staff of then Minister Stuart Robert and it was not disputed. It was clear from Mr McKellar's remarks in our meeting that he was aware of at least some of our research, almost all of which was readily accessible on the Honest History website - and still is.

For all of these reasons, you can understand why we found your statement last evening puzzling.

It would be advantageous for the public debate on commemoration expenditure, including the Villers-Bretonneux Monash project, if the Commonwealth were to release its current claimed figures for Commonwealth and commemoration expenditure since 2008, including corporate donations, and encourage the states to do the same.

At the same time, the Commonwealth might explain why, at a time of heightened security concerns, \$90 million of Defence portfolio money was siphoned off to pay for the Monash project. It seems that commemoration is being prioritised over not only veterans' health but also over the nation's defence.

Your continuing initiatives on mental health and employment for veterans are welcome. So much more could have been done if the limited amount of discretionary expenditure in your portfolio had been directed differently.

Regards

David Stephens
Secretary, Honest History association
Editor, Honest History website
Co-editor, *The Honest History Book*